Little Acorns Montessori

Ascot | Bracknell | Crowthorne

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Document Control

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Author	Jonathan Duffy
Role	Owner/Director
Linked Policies	Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy; SEND Policy; Anti-Bullying Policy; Admissions Policy; Complaints Policy; Staff Code of Conduct, Safer Recruitment Policy

1. Policy Statement

Little Acorns Montessori is committed to providing equality of opportunity and promoting anti-discriminatory practice for all children, families, staff and visitors across our settings in Ascot, Bracknell and Crowthorne.

We believe that every child has the right to be treated with dignity and respect regardless of their age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation. These are the nine protected characteristics defined by the Equality Act 2010, and compliance with this Act is a legal duty, not optional good practice.

We are committed to identifying and removing barriers that may prevent any child from participating fully in the life of our nursery. We recognise that achieving genuine inclusion requires active effort, reflective practice, and continuous review.

2. Statutory Framework and Legislation

This policy has regard to the following legislation and statutory guidance:

- **Equality Act 2010 —** The principal legislation governing equality, prohibiting discrimination, harassment and victimisation on the basis of the nine protected characteristics. This Act replaces and supersedes all previous equality legislation,

including the Race Relations Acts, Sex Discrimination Acts and the Disability Discrimination Act.

- **EYFS Statutory Framework (DfE, 2025, effective 1 September 2025) —** Requires all registered early years providers to promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice, ensuring that every child is included and supported. All welfare, learning and development requirements must be delivered in compliance with the Equality Act 2010.
- **Children Act 1989 —** Places a duty on all those working with children to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children.
- **Children and Families Act 2014 —** Establishes the framework for supporting children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), including duties on early years providers.
- **Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice: 0 to 25 Years (DfE/DoH, 2015, as currently in force) —** Statutory guidance setting out duties for early years providers to identify and support children with SEND, including the requirement to designate a Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO). Note: The government has announced a programme of SEND reform. A revised Code of Practice is expected to be published in due course. This policy will be updated to reflect any changes upon publication.
- **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) 1989 —** Particularly Article 2 (non-discrimination), Article 3 (best interests of the child) and Article 28 (right to education).
- **Human Rights Act 1998 —** Incorporates European Convention on Human Rights rights into domestic law, including Article 8 (right to private and family life) and Article 14 (prohibition of discrimination).
- **Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (Prevent Duty) —** Requires registered early years providers to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism, and to promote British values including mutual respect and tolerance.
- **Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 —** Strengthens safeguarding arrangements for children, including requirements for multi-agency child protection collaboration, information sharing, and the promotion of children's wellbeing. Early years providers must have regard to the safeguarding and welfare duties introduced or reinforced by this Act.

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3. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All children attending Little Acorns Montessori.
- All parents, carers and family members.
- All employees, including management, permanent and temporary staff, and volunteers.
- Students on placement.
- Contractors and visitors to the setting.

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4. Aims

We aim to:

- Provide a secure, welcoming and inclusive environment in which all children can flourish and in which all contributions are valued.
- Actively promote equality of opportunity and challenge discrimination and prejudice in all its forms.
- Ensure that all children have full access to our curriculum, activities and resources, regardless of any protected characteristic or additional need.
- Reflect the diversity of our community in our environment, resources, planning and staffing.
- Foster positive attitudes towards difference through the Montessori philosophy of respect for the individual child.
- Ensure that children with SEND receive the support they need to participate fully, including through reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010.
- Ensure that children whose first language is not English have full access to the curriculum and are supported in their learning.
- Promote the fundamental British Values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Name	Campus
Designated Officer / Nominated Individual	Jonathan Duffy	All Campuses
Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Manager	Elaine Eastham	Ascot Campus
Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Manager	Agata Payne	Bracknell Campus
Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Manager	Emma Gray	Crowthorne Campus
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL) and Deputy Manager	Jessica McGrath/Katy Cooley	Ascot Campus
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL) and Deputy Manager	Joanne Broughton	Bracknell Campus
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL) and Deputy Manager	Martine Loveridge	Crowthorne Campus
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL)	Kira King	Crowthorne Campus (in the absence of Emma/Martine)
Manager on Duty	As rostered	All Campuses
SENDCO	Agata Payne	Bracknell Campus
SENDCO	Kirsten Staples	Ascot Campus
SENDCO	Martine Loverdige/Emma Gray	Crowthorne Campus

5.1 The Manager

- Must ensure this policy is implemented, regularly reviewed and that all staff are trained and supported to deliver it.
- Must ensure the nursery meets its statutory duties under the Equality Act 2010 and the EYFS 2025 framework.
- Must ensure reasonable adjustments are made to enable children with disabilities to access provision.
- Must review and approve this policy annually, or sooner if legislation changes.
- Must ensure that all job adverts, recruitment and selection processes comply with this policy.

5.2 The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

- Must ensure that any equality or inclusion concern which also meets a safeguarding threshold is handled in accordance with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.
- Must liaise with external agencies where a child is at risk due to discrimination or hate crime.

5.3 The Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (Deputy DSL)

- Must fulfil the DSL responsibilities in the DSL's absence.

5.4 The Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO)

- Must coordinate identification, assessment and support for children with SEND in accordance with the SEND Code of Practice 2015.
- Must liaise with parents, external agencies and the local authority to ensure each child's needs are met through an appropriate plan.
- Must ensure that the curriculum and environment are adapted to remove barriers to participation for children with SEND.

5.5 All Practitioners

- Must implement this policy in their daily practice at all times.
- Must challenge and report any discriminatory behaviour, language or attitudes from children, parents or colleagues, following the procedure set out in Section 7 of this policy.
- Should reflect on their own attitudes and practices and seek to identify and address any unconscious bias.
- Must attend equality and diversity training as required by management.
- Should ensure that planning, resources and the environment reflect the diversity of our community and wider society.

5.6 Parents and Carers

- Are expected to respect and uphold the principles of this policy.
- Should inform the setting of any protected characteristic, faith requirement or cultural practice relevant to their child's care and welfare.
- May raise concerns or complaints regarding equality matters through the nursery's Complaints Policy.

6. Detailed Procedures

6.1 Admissions

- Little Acorns Montessori is open to all members of the community across our Ascot, Bracknell and Crowthorne settings.
- Admissions must be based on a fair and consistent criteria applied equally to all applicants. The nursery must not discriminate against any child or family on the basis of any protected characteristic.
- We must not refuse admission to a child with a disability where a reasonable adjustment would make inclusion possible.
- We must develop an access and inclusion plan where a child with a disability or SEND requires support to participate in the curriculum or activities.
- All promotional materials and information must be available in clear, concise language. We should provide information in as many languages as are relevant to our community.
- All parents must be made aware of this policy at or before the point of admission.

6.2 Curriculum and Learning Environment

- Practitioners must plan and deliver activities that take account of the individual needs of every child, ensuring each child can engage and make progress.
- Planning must reflect the widest possible range of cultures, ethnicities, family structures and abilities.
- Resources — including books, dolls, images and equipment — must avoid stereotyping and must reflect diverse communities.
- Discriminatory or derogatory images must not be used.
- Festivals and cultural events from a range of backgrounds should be celebrated authentically and respectfully throughout the year.
- An environment of mutual respect and tolerance must be actively created and maintained.
- Children must be supported to understand that discriminatory behaviour and remarks are unacceptable.
- The curriculum must be fully inclusive for children with SEND, with adaptations and adjustments made as required.
- Children whose first language is not English must be supported with visual cues, bilingual resources and targeted practitioner support to access all learning.

6.3 Valuing Diversity in Families

- We welcome the diversity of family life across our settings and work collaboratively with all families.
- We encourage children to contribute stories from their everyday lives to enrich the nursery's learning environment.
- We actively encourage parents and carers to take part in the life of the nursery and to contribute fully.

- For families whose first language is not English, we value the contribution of their culture and language and will seek translation support or visual communication tools where necessary.
- We work in partnership with parents to ensure that a child's medical, cultural, dietary and religious needs are fully understood and met.

6.4 Food

- We work in partnership with parents to ensure that the medical, cultural and dietary needs of all children are met at mealtimes.
- We help children to learn about a range of food, cultural approaches to mealtimes and eating, and to respect the differences among them.
- Dietary requirements, allergies and religious food restrictions must be recorded on a child's individual record and communicated to all relevant staff.
- In accordance with the EYFS Statutory Framework 2025, Little Acorns Montessori must have regard to the EYFS nutrition guidance at all times. All allergy and dietary information must be gathered, recorded, and kept up to date before a child commences attendance. A member of staff holding a current Paediatric First Aid certificate must be present in the room whenever children are eating. These requirements apply across all three campuses.

6.5 Employment

- All posts must be advertised widely to attract a diverse field of applicants.
- All applicants must be assessed fairly and transparently against explicit and objective criteria relevant to the role.
- The candidate who best meets the criteria must be offered the post, subject to satisfactory references and Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks. This ensures fairness in the selection process.
- All job descriptions must include a commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.
- The nursery must not discriminate against any applicant or employee on the basis of any protected characteristic.
- The application and recruitment process must be monitored regularly to ensure it remains fair and accessible.
- All employees must be treated with dignity and respect. Harassment or victimisation of an employee will be treated as a serious disciplinary matter.
- In accordance with the EYFS Statutory Framework 2025, references must be obtained from all new members of staff before their employment begins. References must be provided by the applicant's current or most recent employer, training provider, or education institution and must be authorised by a senior person within that organisation. No new member of staff may work unsupervised with children or be counted in staff-to-child ratios until their suitability is confirmed. Where a member of staff is dismissed in connection with harm to a child, a mandatory referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service must be made without delay.

6.6 Training and Professional Development

- All staff must receive induction training that includes equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Management must identify and provide equality and diversity training opportunities for all staff and volunteers to enable them to develop inclusive practice.

- The setting's practices must be reviewed regularly to ensure full implementation of this policy.
- Any identified training needs arising from this policy or from an incident review must be addressed promptly.

6.7 British Values

In accordance with the statutory requirement under the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 and the EYFS 2025 framework, Little Acorns Montessori actively promotes the fundamental British Values of:

- Democracy — giving children a voice and the opportunity to contribute to decisions about their environment.
- The Rule of Law — helping children to understand why rules matter and are in place for everyone's benefit.
- Individual Liberty — supporting children to develop confidence and make choices within appropriate boundaries.
- Mutual Respect and Tolerance — celebrating diversity and building an environment of respect for different backgrounds, beliefs and cultures.

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7. Reporting and Recording Discriminatory Incidents

7.1 Definition

A discriminatory incident is any incident that is perceived by a child, parent, member of staff or any other person to be motivated by prejudice or hostility towards someone's protected characteristic. This includes verbal and physical acts, written communications and online behaviour.

7.2 Procedure for Staff

If a practitioner witnesses or is made aware of a discriminatory incident, they must follow the steps below in order:

1. Intervene immediately and safely to stop any ongoing discriminatory behaviour.
2. Support any child or adult who has been targeted, acknowledging their experience and offering reassurance.
3. Report the incident to the Manager or, in the Manager's absence, the DSL, on the same day that it occurs.
4. Complete a Discriminatory Incident Record Form (see Section 7.3 below) as soon as practicable and no later than the end of the working day on which the incident occurred.
5. Where the incident also meets a safeguarding threshold, follow the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy immediately and inform the DSL without delay.

7.3 Recording — Discriminatory Incident Record Form

Each record must include the following information:

- Date, time and location of the incident.
- Name(s) and role(s) of all individuals involved (child, parent, staff member, visitor).

- A factual description of what occurred, including any exact words used where relevant.
- The protected characteristic(s) to which the incident relates.
- Action taken at the time of the incident.
- Follow-up action agreed and by whom.
- Name and signature of the reporting member of staff.
- Name and signature of the Manager or DSL who received the report.

7.4 Storage of Records

- Completed Discriminatory Incident Record Forms must be stored securely in the locked Equality and Inclusion file held in a locked office or cupboard at each site.
- Records must be retained for a minimum of three years.
- Records are confidential and must only be accessed by the Manager, DSL or, where relevant, Ofsted inspectors.
- Where a child is involved, a note must also be placed in the child's confidential safeguarding or welfare record.

7.5 Follow-Up and Review

- The Manager must review all recorded incidents at least termly to identify patterns and inform staff training and practice development.
- Anonymised data on discriminatory incidents must be reported to the management committee or proprietor annually as part of the equality monitoring review.
- Where an incident involves a parent or visitor, the Manager must respond in writing within five working days, setting out the action taken and referencing this policy.

8. Reasonable Adjustments and SEND

Under the Equality Act 2010 and the SEND Code of Practice 2015, Little Acorns Montessori must make reasonable adjustments to ensure that children with disabilities and SEND can participate fully in all aspects of nursery life.

- The SENCO must coordinate support for children with identified SEND, working in partnership with parents, the child's key person and any relevant external agencies.
- Individual support plans (such as Education, Health and Care Plans or SEN Support plans) must be reviewed regularly with parents.
- Physical adjustments to the environment must be made where reasonably practicable to remove barriers to access.
- Additional resources, visual supports or specialist equipment must be sourced as needed.
- Staff must be supported to understand and implement individual children's plans through training and supervision.
- Little Acorns Montessori is committed to monitoring and responding to the government's ongoing SEND reform programme. As reforms are implemented — including the Inclusive Mainstream Fund from 2026-27 and the national SEND training programme from September 2026 — the setting will seek to access available

funding and training to strengthen inclusive provision. The SENCO at each campus will lead on monitoring developments and updating practice accordingly. This policy will be amended as any revised SEND Code of Practice or associated statutory guidance is published.

9. Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

- This policy must be reviewed annually by the Manager, or immediately following any change in relevant legislation, statutory guidance, or following a significant discriminatory incident.
- The nursery must monitor the diversity of its children, families and staff and use this information to inform planning, resources and training.
- An equality impact assessment should be carried out when any significant change to practice, provision or policy is planned.
- This policy must be made available to all parents and carers on request and should be referenced in the nursery's parent information materials.
- Ofsted inspectors may request evidence of this policy and of the nursery's practice in implementing it. Records, planning documentation and staff training logs constitute evidence of compliance.
- In carrying out its monitoring and review functions, Little Acorns Montessori will have due regard to the three aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010, Section 149): eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advancing equality of opportunity; and fostering good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

10. Complaints

Any parent, carer, child, employee or member of the public who believes that Little Acorns Montessori has failed to comply with this policy may raise a complaint through the nursery's Complaints Policy.

Where a complaint relates to a possible breach of the Equality Act 2010, the complainant may also contact:

- **The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC):** www.equalityhumanrights.com
- **Ofsted:** www.gov.uk/complain-ofsted-about-childcare

11. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner in the event of any changes in legislation or guidance, or following any safeguarding incident. The next scheduled review date is June 2027.

Policy Author	Jonathan Duffy

Date	June 2026